

Seattle Pedestrian Advisory Board Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, 12 March, 2008

Boards and Commissions Room, City Hall

6:00pm - 8:00pm

SPAB Members Present: Celeste Gilman, Chair; Ben Smith, Vice-Chair; Howard Wu; Chris Tachibana, Secretary; Paul Niebanck; T. Frick; Jon Morgan; Kristen Lohse; Randy Earle

Also present: Jim Curtin, SDOT liaison to SPAB; Dongho Chang (SBAB Liaison); Doug Beeman; Jacob Struhsma (Feet First); Sarah Anderson (Seattle Metropolitan Magazine)

Presenters: Bob Powers (SDOT), Tracy Sunday (SDOT), Ron Paananen (WSDOT), Sarah Driggs (King County DOT, Metro)

Absent: Mark Bandy, Petaki Cobell, Tom Williams

1. Introductions (6:00)

2. Public Comment (6:05)

Doug Beeman introduced himself as recently retired, a bicyclist and pedestrian who is interested in SPAB issues.

3. Alaskan Way Viaduct update from SDOT (6:05)

Ron Paananen gave a history of the Viaduct Project. Two alternatives (cut and cover, or rebuild) were selected in 2006 that focused on the highway corridor, and replacing the viaduct with an option with similar vehicle capacity. In a March 13 advisory vote, the public voted down both options. The two issues now are safety and expense, addressed in Six "Moving Forward" projects announced by the Governor, County Executive and Mayor after the advisory vote.

1. Stabilize columns between Yesler and Columbia. This is not a retrofit, but improves seismic safety.
2. Relocation of electrical lines from the south end to Railroad Ave, which will start later this year.
3. Upgrade of the Battery Street Tunnel. This will be phased to reduce traffic interruption.
4. Stabilize the Viaduct from Lenora to the Battery Street Tunnel. This retrofitting is on hold while the waterfront is developed.
5. Replace the Viaduct from South Holgate to South King with a new side-by-side section. This still has the underpass, but adds exits for access to downtown.
6. Transit enhancements and other improvements. These are to manage traffic during south end construction. They include I-5 active traffic management, SR519 freight connections, S. Spokane street improvements, increased bus service, traffic signal upgrades and commuter incentives.

T Frick asked how much of the \$125 million goes to transit, including increased stops and crosswalks at stops, and how much benefits single occupancy vehicles. Ron said \$30 million goes directly to transit service during traffic impact. Funds are limited by the terms of gas tax usage, so long term transit cannot be funded, but construction improvements can include dedicated transit benefits. Bob said some transit and crosswalk improvements are associated with Bridging the Gap.

Bob Powers described the Central Waterfront Partnership planning. The project now includes the entire transportation network from Elliot Bay to I-5. In December 2007 the Mayor appointed a

Stakeholder Advisory Committee (SAC) of 30 individuals to provide comments on technical work for waterfront replacement. Meetings are open to the public. An additional Interagency Working Group that addresses technical issues, for example shipping and freight, is also contributing.

The groups have come up with guiding principles and are working on performance measures and building block elements that will be used in creating possible scenario suggestions. Various boards like SPAB will receive updates and the scenarios will be presented to the tri-agencies (King County, City and State). An independent project manager is overseeing and reviewing the process. Information and meeting times and locations will be continually updated at <http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/projects/viaduct>

Dongho asked about surfaces and transit. Ron and Bob said dedicated transit lanes are part of the considerations.

Paul asked about creating an atmosphere that is conducive to pedestrians, business, and neighborhood interactions. Bob said the Guiding Principles include integrating the waterfront and including pedestrians. This is also considered under the Complete Streets Ordinance.

T Frick asked about independent urban mobility consultants. The SAC board includes several urban design experts.

Dongho commented that bicycle safety had improved greatly between first and second drafts of the project, based on public and SBAB comments.

Bob, Ron and Celeste discussed pedestrian issues at the railroad crossing.

Ron said this will be a design-build project awarded as early as July or August.

Ben asked about funding for the Moving Forward projects. Ron said \$915 million came from project funds, mainly gas tax increases and a federal earmark. A \$2.4 billion estimate is in the budget for Viaduct safety and replacement. This includes the entire corridor.

Paul asked about transit lanes on 1st Ave and hoped transit would not disrupt this environment. Ron said transit routes will be determined by the most reliable options. Metro prefers SR99.

Celeste suggestion automatic pedestrian signals with countdowns; guiding information for pedestrian route changes; lighting at the underpass. Ben commented that this could be an opportunity to update old signals. T Frick and Celeste mentioned that timing is also important.

Sarah asked about determining detour routes during construction and mandatory rules for pedestrian access. Bob said pedestrians routes are not mandatory, but this is under consideration.

4. New Board Member Welcome (7:00)

Continuing and new board members introduced themselves, including where they live, their professions and their pedestrian issues. Roles, accomplishments, goals and functions of the board were discussed.

5. Round Robin (7:55)

Paul reported on his presentation to the Pedestrian Master Plan Advisory Group (PMPAG) on comments and recommendations from SPAB, generated at February's meeting and summarized in writing by Paul. Reception by PMPAG was positive and generated substantial comments. He had a handout with SPAB comments and the response from PMPAG. Paul reported on a good pedestrian experience at Cal Anderson Park, which he found active, lively and safe.

T Frick has been researching open space and streetscapes. She is working on a cultural audit for the Northgate Urban Center park. The area has a significant senior population and someone suggested to her that she conduct a walking audit in dark glasses, uncomfortable shoes or other hindrances to experience accessibility issues. She will organize a walking tour under these conditions. Celeste and Paul suggested contacting Barbara Gray.

Celeste announced a meeting on Friday for the Council's Pedestrian Safety Education and Enforcement Campaign. Chris, taking over pedestrian safety issues for Mary Lou, cannot attend, but will forward the meeting information and a draft list of suggestions from the board to send to Jodie Vice.

Jim Curtin had asked Celeste to announce a bicycle-pedestrian-freight meeting organized by Grace Crunican. She and Ben will be involved and will give more information as it comes.

Celeste sent out the SPAB Work Plan to the Mayor, Councilmembers, and directors SPAB members met with last year, and a copy will be posted on the website.

Celeste was interviewed as a PMPAG member by SvR, who has been interviewing board members. PMPAG has been discussing accessibility of the plan, for example a web version.

SPAB's synopsis of Pedestrian Advisory Board Discussion was approved to be sent to the Mayor's office.

Howard reported on the SBAB meeting. They heard the same Alaskan Way Viaduct presentation, and a presentation from Grace Crunican. SPD now has a dedicated liaison to SBAB so this is a possibility for SPAB. Howard was in Vancouver last weekend and noticed "look arrows" showing pedestrians which direction to look for traffic (in case they are from a place with a different traffic direction). In Lake City, he is getting involved with opening a creek that has been buried.

Chris has written as a personal citizen to the Mayor's office, supporting extension of the Stone Way road diet to 34th. She also wrote state legislators about removing the rental tax on shared cars (Zipcar).

Ben said he will attend a Sound Transit 60% Design open house for the light rail station. He did his first bike ride last weekend that included Stone Way and he noticed the change where the road diet ends. He noticed a short timing signal to cross Denny on Bellevue, which seems to be timed so cars don't have to stop.

Dongho said comments are being taken on Safe Routes to Schools, so this is an opportunity to comment on sidewalk improvements in school areas. An industrial group has filed with the Dept of Planning to include in the comprehensive plan a prohibition of trails next to industrial areas. He encouraged people to write to oppose. Ben and Dongho said this targets Ballard but would affect other areas. Dongho said, relevant to Ben's experience on Denny, that in the city of Everett, 51 second cycle lengths encourage walking.

Jon said after a jaywalking ticket at Broadway and Harrison he timed cycles and found an average of a 55-second wait although the city said the longest wait is supposed to be 45 seconds. He has sent news items on pedestrian accidents, including the serious one on Nickerson that Doug witnessed. Jon is disappointed with the news coverage and is following up. He was happy to see an article in the PI on street light outages. He also noticed that Senator Harkin has introduced a bill on Complete Streets. Jon supported the walking audit suggested by T Frick.

Randy said he managed to have several incidents of waiting for a crosswalk signal where there is no traffic, without getting completely outraged.

6. Annual Retreat

This is usually the first Saturday in May, so it is scheduled for May 3rd this year. T Frick said it could be at Mithun. Celeste requested items to discuss and possible educational topics. Ben suggested topics that came up in the work plan brainstorming list.

7. Upcoming Agenda Items (8:05)

Ben suggested inviting the new Council members.

Celeste suggested the construction issues when there is more to report on, and the Complete Streets checklist.

8. Adjourn (8:05)